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# Hilltopics: Volume 2, Issue 4

Hilltopics Staff

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# HILLTOPICS

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## Point-Counterpoint: In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, who is to blame for the slow relief?

### **Bush needs to focus on New Orleans, not Baghdad**

by Yasmin Awad

*"Congress announced a plan to rename the Gulf of Mexico. They want to start calling it the Persian Gulf II in hopes that President Bush will send troops there faster." -Jay Leno*

Over the past week, I've watched the horrifying scenes of despair on TV. With these depressing feelings, I've had mixed feelings towards the reaction to this disaster. I'm proud of how the American people have stepped up to the plate and helped, but the problem is that the federal government has not gotten with the program yet.

These are the times we need the government most. Sadly, its reaction was slow and inadequate. The problem started before the hurricane hit. Because of spending on the war in Iraq and federal tax cuts, Bush slashed funding for FEMA, sent a large chunk of the Louisiana National Guard to fight an unnecessary war, and went on vacation.

Bush says to stop playing the blame game. Isn't it interesting that when people don't want to play the blame game, they're to blame?

Of course, no one is to blame for Hurricane Katrina; however, the hurricane's devastating impact was amplified by the bad choices and bad policies of our leaders.

Wal-Mart packed food and water when hearing the warning of the 5-scale hurricane. In a matter of minutes after the storm, they were there providing relief. If a private company

see **PRESIDENT** on page 3

### **Louisiana officials need to stop shifting blame**

by Kyle Snyder

Like many of us here at SMU, I watched the Gulf Coast bear the brunt of one of the worst natural disasters in America's history. When it appeared that the city of New Orleans had avoided the doomsday scenarios many had predicted, I waited for the city to return to normal - loads of tourists, parties in the French Quarter, and the opening of the NFL season for the Saints.

As the storm moved inland, things got worse before they got better. Help was on the way for the thousands stranded at the Superdome and Convention Center, but who was to be held responsible for the deplorable conditions that followed the hurricane?

The media reports out of New Orleans fanned the "blame Bush" flames as journalists and pundits joined Mayor Ray Nagin and Governor Kathleen Blanco in declaring open season on President Bush. It wasn't long before we heard from Michael Moore, Jesse Jackson, and anyone else looking to advance his or her agenda at the president's expense. Digging through the shouting matches and sound bites, one will discover that the planning and response from the local government in New Orleans was far less than what was required. Both Blanco and Nagin deflected

criticism to the federal government in the aftermath of the storm to save themselves personally and politically. This left an enormous burden on federal agencies needing state and local guidance in order to succeed.

Perhaps the most important element of the local government's responsibility involves preparation for the storm's arrival. The size and scope of Katrina was known days in advance, so President Bush asked Blanco to order a full evacuation of New Orleans on Saturday. However, the governor

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**Be Heard:** Got an opinion? *Hilltopics* is always looking for good submissions and interesting feedback. Email your thoughts to [hilltopics@hotmail.com](mailto:hilltopics@hotmail.com).

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## How can a cup of coffee change someone's life? When it's Fair Trade coffee, you'd be surprised

by Eric Johnson

Nine months after the 2004 Tsunami killed hundreds of thousands of individuals along the Indian Ocean, comments about the disaster seemed to finally have faded from mention, the couple weeks in July of thinking about third world debt were definitely behind us, and things looked pretty normal.

With the coming of Katrina came a return of all these state of emergency activities as well as a new question: Was the "World Weekly News" end times prophesy coming to pass? Could there have been any kind of connection between these two catastrophes of the last ten months - cell phones perhaps?

Mayor A. J. Holloway of Biloxi described Katrina as "our tsunami," thus suggesting an extremely strong relation between the two. Despite the numerical difference between each disaster's death toll, we will treat them as equals. So, in taking this analogy would it not follow to consider the crisis in Sudan's Darfur region, which has forced 2.5 million people out of their homes in the last two years and lead to the death of an estimated 400,000, the tsunami of Sudan? Or the estimated 42,000 Africans that died of AIDS in the week that followed Katrina - could AIDS be the tsunami of sub-Saharan Africa? Once we look around I'm sure we could find a heart-breaking number of these "tsunamis" going on all over the world. But, instead of labeling numerous displaced people around the world as having shared "tsunami" experiences, I would find it more accurate to say that all 6.4 billion people of the world share a fragile, volatile, tsunami planet.

Here in Dallas we are seeing the effect of Katrina with the many newly residing evacuees. But Katrina victims aren't the only refugees in Dallas. There are over 53,000 refugees from all over the world living in the

cramped Vickery Meadows area of Dallas, according to the Lutheran Inner-City Network Coalition. Americans have joined together to make an immense difference in the lives of the victimized Mississippi and Louisiana residents. However, in several months as New Orleans is

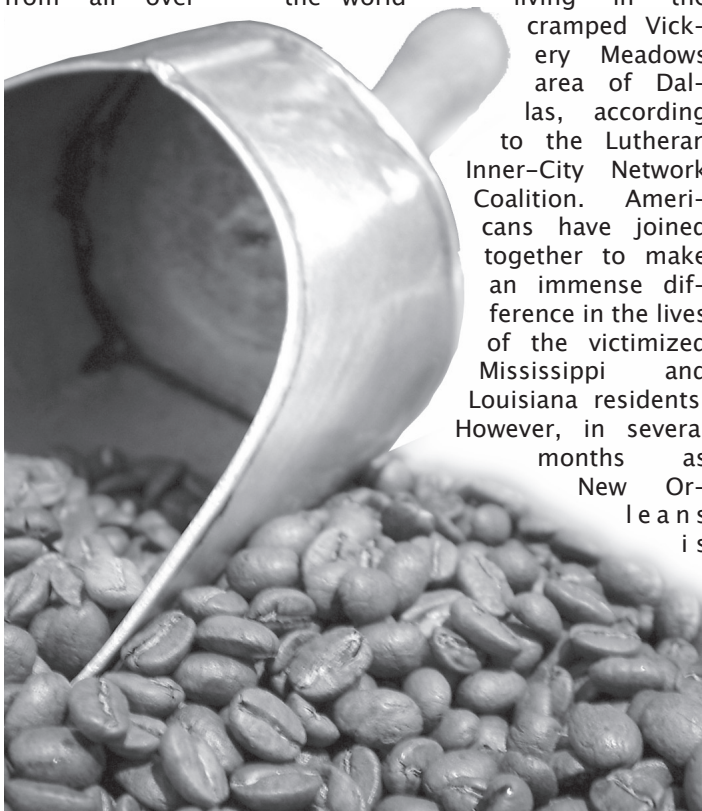
gradually rebuilt and people return, what will be the condition of the 2+ million people that had to flee their homes in Darfur? What will happen to the estimated 10 million people in Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and nearby countries that will not have enough food this winter because of the 2005 famine?

The struggle against disaster relief is not an in-and-out job; it is an ongoing battle requiring a long-term presence and continuous effort. What the millions of refugees and severely struggling people around the world need are people willing to commit to more than one week of activism or a semi-annual benefit concert. After all, what is the alternative - you sit around and complain about a bunch of people in Washington D.C. with the power to tax for not doing enough? People know that mere reactivity doesn't really work, and no one likes that kind of America anyway.

Not all of the world's "tsunamis" are natural disasters. In a number of instances, it is the greedy inhumanity of certain organizations that prevent people from lifting themselves out of abject poverty. According to Oxfam statistics, 1 out of every 5 people in this world live on less than \$1 a day. To be as concise as possible, our trade systems are not as fair as they could be - "Free Trade" is NOT the same thing as "Fair Trade." An average coffee grower will receive 40 cents for a pound of coffee beans that sells in our markets for \$10. The money clearly isn't going to the farmer. However, when you buy a Fair Trade certified product, you can ensure that the farmer is getting a reasonable price for his or her work. In a third world country, these few extra dollars can make the difference between being able to buy necessary medicine and having to put your child on the street. All you have to do is tell the guy at Java City you want the Fair Trade coffee - yes, giving can be as easy as buying a cup of coffee - and that's an easy habit to make.

For help finding other ways to bring service into your regular schedule, I recommend getting in touch with the Give Network people up at Wesley by contacting me at [ejohnson@smu.edu](mailto:ejohnson@smu.edu).

*Eric Johnson is a senior marketing major.*



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## The abstainers view: DeLaPorte missed the point with her sex education article last week

by Hans Mantor

In respectful response to the article about safe sex published in the September 6th edition of *Hilltopics*, I would like to represent the view of one who abstains. The problem with most sex ed courses, in my opinion, is that they do not stress abstinence enough, much less mention it at all. I am sorry to hear that some people were only presented with the "NO SEX" attitude, but I sure wish I had heard that people actually abstained from sex until marriage.

I learned sex ed when I was a child from multiple sources—my parents, teachers, peers, and even my babysitter who was not embarrassed about explaining what the condom that fell out of her purse was. All of these sources, unfortunately, forgot to mention the absolute safest form of sex: none. Because I had never heard of people who willingly did not have sex, I was taught to believe that everyone has sex, at least until the first time that I laughed out loud during a "Sex, God, and Me" conference at my local church.

An example of a faulty sex ed course is right under our noses. The first year Wellness class teaches sex ed, but they neglect to mention abstinence. Whether by incompetence or the ignorant acceptance that everyone is having sex, the Wellness class taught that the best way to be safe is "communication." Give me a break. Obviously the only way to be

100% safe is by not engaging in sexual acts, but our society seems to have given up on the noble idea of devotion to one person and settled for second best, "communication."

I am not saying that safe sex should not be taught, because I am not ignorant enough to believe that everyone abstains. Even when it was socially appalling to have sex outside of wedlock, accounts of such actions can be found in writings such as *Candide* and *The Canterbury Tales*, as well as hundreds of diaries. I think most people would agree that a combination of teaching abstinence as the safest choice, followed by different forms of protection as the less safe alternatives, is an intelligent and factual approach to sex ed.

I believe it is imperative to teach our children that there is a large group of people who choose not to have sex. This way people will grow up knowing that abstinence is not merely a vestigial idea, but a fairly popular practice. It is unjust to program our children to believe that everyone is having sex. As impossible as it may seem to all of the nymphs out there, there are those who abstain without losing a wink of sleep. In fact, we probably get more sleep in the long run.

*Hans Mantor is a sophomore finance and political science major.*

## President Bush has let us all down...again

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could plan an efficient relief effort in time, why couldn't the federal government of the most powerful and richest nation in the world?

It's true that it's mainly the local and state governments' responsibility to deal with the hurricane, but this is an extreme case. They don't have nearly enough money or people to deal with the situation.

Some have questioned if the Bush administration is really attacking countries across the world for the "safety" and "freedom" of the people. This was his opportunity to directly answer that question – when people in the United States are obviously not safe. Now we know that the well-being of his people is not his priority; he's just using that as an excuse to get what he really wants – power, oil, and more power.

In his ineloquent and hollow speech – that must have really helped the victims – he asked for private support from the public. I don't remember him asking the public for financial support for the war in Iraq, much less if the war was worth fighting.

Some might think that criticizing the government is unappreciative and unpatriotic, but isn't our country based on questioning the government? The American people are what keep the government in check. Look how the federal government is starting to shape up after the criticism – more money is being used for the relief effort. Bush came back from his abnormally long vacation in Crawford. The inexperienced FEMA chief Mike Brown, who was previously the commissioner of the International Arabian Horse Association, was replaced by a more experienced person to deal with Hurricane Katrina.

I think the federal government's priority right now has become the Gulf (the one in North America, not the Middle East). So far, however, its late efforts are still not enough.

*Yasmin Awad is a sophomore journalism major.*

## State officials should be ashamed of their efforts

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waited 24 hours before the order was actually given. During this time, the mayor's office set up the Superdome as a "shelter of last resort" for those who did not have the means to leave the city. If the evacuation plan were followed from there, school and city buses would have been mobilized to evacuate those from the Superdome and other city shelters. Instead, Nagin ordered everyone bound for the Superdome to bring four days worth of food and water, implementing an evacuation plan that basically implied (as reported in a July 24 story in the New Orleans Times-Picayune), "in the event of a major hurricane, you're on your own." The city also failed to execute a plan to evacuate the convicts from local prisons. When you consider New Orleans' annual contention for murder capital of the United States (264 homicides in 2004), you have an explanation for the anarchy that engulfed the city.

When the public finally realized the full scope of the disaster, the federal government and countless organizations stood ready and willing to assist in the recovery efforts. Victimized by their poor planning and preparation, Nagin and Blanco decided to engage Bush and FEMA director Michael Brown in a shouting match while thousands continued to suffer in the streets of New Orleans. Blanco refused to sign over control of Louisiana National Guard units to the federal government, instead appointing her own relief coordinator. Senator Mary Landrau is on record saying she would slap the president in the face when he came to Louisiana. When Bush finally arrived, she criticized him for being there for a photo op. The president is damned if he does and damned if he doesn't – an all too familiar theme from his critics. While the federal government's actual response may have been hindered by bureaucratic politics in Washington, the blame for the human disaster falls on the shoulders of a weak governor and on the steps of New Orleans' City Hall.

*Kyle Snyder is a junior accounting major.*



## A black-and-white issue: Kanye West's comments distract from the real crisis on the Gulf Coast

by Samantha Urban

A well-intentioned telethon took an unexpected turn last Friday thanks to rapper Kanye West. (Visit <http://www.ifilm.com/ifilmdetail/2678975?htv=12> to view a video clip of the controversy.)

NBC's "A Concert for Hurricane Relief" aired Friday night and featured performances by popular musicians and appearances from various celebrities. The show's purpose was to urge Americans to donate, with proceeds going to the American Red Cross.

Comedian Mike Myers was paired with Kanye West for a short spot that began with Myers talking about Katrina's aftermath. West then deviated from the teleprompter by saying, "I hate the way they portray us in the media. If you see a black family, it says they're looting. See a white family, it says they're looking for food."

West continued, "So anybody out there who wants to help with the set up, the way that America is set up to help ... The poor, the black people, the less well off as slow as possible.... We already realize a lot of the people that could help are at war now fighting another way, and they've given them permission to go down and shoot us."

Myers tried to gloss over the deviation by going back to the script. But West cut in again, adding, "George Bush doesn't care about black people." Footage shows Myers doing a double take before cutting to a surprised Chris Tucker.

The show, broadcast from New York on NBC, MSNBC and CNBC, was aired live on the East Coast, allowing the rapper's rantings to go uncensored. There was a several-second tape delay, but the person in charge "was instructed to listen for a curse word, and didn't realize [West] had gone off-script," said NBC spokeswoman Rebecca Marks.

NBC later issued a response stating, "Kanye West departed from the scripted comments... his opinions in no way represent the views of the networks. It would be most unfortunate if the efforts of the artists who participated tonight and the generosity of millions of

Americans who are helping those in need are overshadowed by one person's opinion."

In today's times, it seems you can't have a celebrity telethon without someone ranting against the government. West was obviously bothered by the situation and was affected by what he saw...and he decided to lay the blame on Bush.

West's point regarding the media bias has merit. Yahoo! News and other news outlets displayed photos of people wading through water with supplies taken from New Orleans grocery stores. It was difficult to ignore the contrast of the darker-skinned subjects being captioned as "looting a grocery store," while the lighter-skinned subjects were described "finding bread and soda from a local grocery store." Aren't these captions evidence of discrimination in the media?

Media prejudice aside, Kanye West's remark about President Bush not caring about the African American population is ridiculous. Bush is an extremely easy target right now, but this is *not* a race issue. The lack of aid and rising death toll can be attributed to a plethora of causes.

West was out of line for his misplaced comments and complete lack of professionalism. Instead of sparking yet another racial division, West should have acted out in a more responsible way by attracting positive attention to the relief effort. His statements appalled me, not because they attacked Bush, but because they drew attention away from the main issue: the human beings (black, white, or otherwise) who have lost everything in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.


*Samantha Urban is a freshman journalism and film major.*



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